



THE  
APOCRYPHA  
IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

JUDITH

HERBERT PENTIN











# The Apocrypha in English Literature

EDITED BY HERBERT PENTIN, M.A., M.R.A.S.

## JUDITH

*Ἰουδιθ ἡ μακαρία*

—CLEMENT OF ROME





The Apocrypha in English Literature

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# JUDITH

BY

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APOCRYPHA. EDITOR OF "THE APOCRYPHA IN  
GREEK AND ENGLISH," "THE APOCRYPHA  
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"Scyppendes mægð"

—*The Old English "Judith"*



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## P R E F A C E

THE story of Judith in the Apocrypha is an historical romance written with a purpose. And the purpose of the book was of far more importance to its author and its readers than were its "facts." Some actual deed of heroism, handed down in traditional form, is its likely basis. And though Biblical and historical names are freely borrowed, these did not deceive the Jewish reader. He probably saw, as the student of to-day can see, that history, geography, and chronology are boldly sacrificed to the lofty purpose of the book.

*Judith* was composed under the Hasmonean dynasty with the purpose of encouraging the Israelite men and women to observe the Law strictly, and to resist

every attack on their liberties and religious faith. Some think that "Nebuchadnezzar" is a veiled allusion to Antiochus Epiphanes, and "Holofernes" to Nicanor; and Jewish tradition identifies "Judith" with a sister of Judas Maccabæus. But if the book was written towards the close of the Maccabæan era, as seems probable from internal evidence, these identifications lose the edge of their attractiveness.

The author appears to have been a devout Palestinian Jew, possessing all the fiery spirit of the older Judaism, with its accompanying zeal for the ceremonial law. The book was originally written in Hebrew. It is extant in Greek, Latin, and Syriac.<sup>1</sup>

The "morality" of the story does not seem to have been questioned in early

<sup>1</sup> A shorter recension of the story, in a possible historical form, in Hebrew, has been edited by Dr. Gaster.

times ; but in later days there have been those who, while overlooking the perfidious assassination<sup>1</sup> by Jael, recorded in the Book of Judges, have poured vials of indignation on “the murderous treachery” of Judith — the Jael of the Apocrypha.

It is well, however, to remember that “All that is related in Scripture of the servants of God is not approved by Scripture.” And neither of these strenuous, militant, women should be judged by the standard of morality in the present day ; the circumstances of their country and time should be taken into account. The act of the manly Jael and of “the lady Judith” has its repulsive side ; yet it is right not to forget the noble, though

<sup>1</sup> Milton, in his *Samson Agonistes*, softens Jael's act :—

“Not less renowned than in Mount Ephraim,  
Jael, who with inhospitable guile  
Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nailed.”

distorted, patriotism that urged them to it.<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Judith should be read in the Revised Version of the Apocrypha and in the Authorised Version too. It is, as the late Dr. Scrivener truly said, "a fine work; grave, elevated, pious, chaste in thought and expression. Were it not buried where it is, it would long since have attracted the admiration it deserves."

It is with the idea of re-awakening a more extended interest in the Book of Judith—a book which, as will be seen, has not only interested theologians, but has also inspired poets, artists, and sculptors, and influenced novelists, playwrights, and musicians—that this little volume is issued. And it is hoped that, as time

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor J. Stuart Blackie's "Lines written at Magus Muir" (*Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece*):—

"Not all are murderers who kill,  
The cause commends the blow."



goes on, other books of the Apocrypha may be similarly treated.

The Anglo-Saxon poem on Judith, dealt with in Chapter III., is little known save to students of Old English. John Mason Neale's Seatonian Poem on the same subject, from which extracts are made in Chapter IV., is almost forgotten. And Thomas Bailey Aldrich's tragedy, "Judith of Bethulia," deserves a larger audience.

Much help in the chapter containing miscellaneous literary references to the Book of Judith has been given by various contributors to *The International Journal of Apocrypha*, to whom—and especially to the Rev. W. H. Daubney—my hearty thanks are due.

H. P.

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# I

## INTRODUCTION

### A PLEA FOR THE APOCRYPHA

“The Holy Apocrypha, which I joy to hear once more read in churches.”—*Sir Walter Scott.*



# I

## INTRODUCTION

### A PLEA FOR THE APOCRYPHA

THE Archbishop of Canterbury recently surprised many Church people and others by expressing his desire "that a systematic effort should be made to extend the knowledge of people generally about the Apocrypha, and to encourage its more careful study." The surprise was natural, as the books of the Apocrypha are regarded by the majority of English-speaking people as worthless, if not positively dangerous. "A deadly snare for the souls of men;" "a human composition replete with error, which wickedly assumes to be a revelation from heaven;" "a dreadful

abomination, abundantly interspersed with falsehoods, false doctrines, superstitions, and contradictions of itself and of the Word of God"—these are some of the charges that have been hurled against the Apocrypha.<sup>1</sup> And yet there are, at least, three good reasons why these despised books should be more carefully studied.

## I

One reason is because the Apocrypha is a portion of the Church's Bible. It is not generally known, and yet it is quite true, that the only Bible which has legal and official, besides ecclesiastical, warrant—the Bible on which the Sovereign is sworn—contains the Apocrypha. And this complete Bible is also the Bible of the Churches of the East and West.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in a chapter on "The Apocrypha Controversy" in *The Religious Controversies of Scotland*, by H. F. Henderson, M.A. (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh).



Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, of Lincoln, once said: "If you carry a Bible without the Apocrypha into Greece, Asia, and Palestine — *i.e.* into those very countries whence the Gospel derived its origin and language—you would be told that you have not the Bible, but only a mutilated copy of it. The Greek Church would renounce you as guilty of sectarian error if you presented her with a Bible not containing the Apocryphal books. If you pass over to France and Italy, or to Spain and Portugal, and endeavour to circulate such Bibles among the people, they will immediately say: 'This may be an English Bible, but it is not the Bible of Christendom. It excludes books which the Eastern and Western Churches have never ceased to read from the earliest times to this hour.' "

It therefore behoves Anglican Church people, at any rate, to familiarise them-

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selves with the unfamiliar Apocrypha, which is a portion of the Bible of the Holy Church Universal.

### II

Another reason why the Apocrypha should be better known is because it supplies the blank leaf between Malachi and Matthew, and contains the Jewish history of several centuries—those “silent centuries” immediately preceding the coming of Christ.

At the end of the Old Testament we see the Persian monarchy in the ascendancy; at the beginning of the New Testament, Rome is the mighty Power. We can go to the Apocrypha to know how this came about. The Old Testament is written by Jews in Hebrew; the New Testament is written by Jews in Greek. What has produced this change?

The Apocrypha again gives us the key. In the Old Testament the age-long tendency of the Jews is towards idolatry; in the New Testament, idolatry is a thing abhorred by the Jews. Why this revolution of feeling? Once more, in the Apocrypha, we may find some of the workings of this remarkable change. In the Old Testament we have no mention of the sect of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees; in the New Testament they are prominent. When did they arise? And the answer is—in the Age of the Maccabees.

Thus, the Apocrypha is the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments; it describes one of the most heroic and patriotic struggles in the history of the world—"a story inspiring enough to be inspired"<sup>1</sup>—and it also illus-

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's judgment on the Story of the Maccabees, quoted in *I. and II. Maccabees*, by Prof. Fairweather, M.A. (J. M. Dent, London).

trates the development and transition of Jewish thought generally.

### III

The Apocrypha is also a manual containing some of the literature of the Jews between Nehemiah and the New Testament. In the Apocrypha there are poems, sonnets, essays, epigrams, prose-hymns, prayers, confessions, visions, romances, legends, wisdom writings, proverbs, and solid history itself.

It is true, of course, that the books are not inspired in the same degree as the Canonical Scriptures; yet, as the present Dean of Westminster has pointed out, the Jewish people were an inspired people, and therefore even their national literature is an inspired literature, although the tide of inspiration was not in full flow during the period when there was

“no prophet more.” But of books most deserving of study by Christian men and women, the Apocrypha should be given precedence of all others, after the Old and New Testaments.

This is its rightful claim — a claim which is acknowledged by the Church of England ; for she has not only borrowed for her Prayer-book and Homilies much from the Apocrypha, but has incorporated no mean portion of it in her Lectionary, besides officially describing the collection of books as “the other books which the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners.” (*Article VI.*)

The literature of the Apocrypha, too, as literature, has appealed to many of our most famous poets and authors, *e.g.* Ælfric, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Scott, Sheridan, Coleridge, Emerson, Longfellow, Matthew Arnold,

George Herbert, Charles Kingsley, George Eliot, Thackeray, Dickens, Tennyson, Ruskin, and Keble. And no wonder! The Book of Wisdom is full of eloquent and sublime sayings on God, the soul, and immortality. Ecclesiasticus is "one of the noblest of uninspired compositions, if indeed the author so full of faith and holy fear can be regarded as wholly uninspired."<sup>1</sup> It is another Wisdom book, containing in part a manual of household discipline composed of thoughtful essays and homely maxims, charged with sanctified common-sense, sometimes with humour.

The Book of Judith is an historical novel with a purpose; "a good, serious, brave tragedy;" "a holy and useful book."<sup>2</sup> The Book of Tobit is a perfect idyll of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. F. H. A. Scrivener in *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* (Cambridge University Press).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, *Werke*, ed. Walch, xiv. 81.

Jewish home-life ; “ an elegant, pleasing, and godly book ; ” “ a truly beautiful, wholesome, and profitable poem, the production of a skilled poet.”<sup>1</sup> In the Apocalypse of Esdras the great problems of human existence and human destiny are perhaps more boldly and reverently faced than in any other ancient sacred writing. The Prayer of Manasseh is a noble confession of sin. The Song of the Three Children contains the *Benedicite*, that stirring aid to adoration which finds a place in the morning service of the Church of England. In the Story of Susanna, and in Bel and the Dragon, there are some of the legends that clustered around the name of Daniel. The First Book of the Maccabees is a history-book of sterling and priceless worth. And Baruch contains some excellent poetry.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Indeed, the Apocrypha is a wonderful manual of devotional and instructive literature. It is "a portion of the unconscious 'Præparatio Evangelica,' paving the way for the central event in the world's history."<sup>1</sup> And its lasting value has been well summed up by the Bishop of Winchester (Dr. Ryle)<sup>2</sup> in the following words :—

"The Apocrypha forms part of the literature of the age upon which the Wisdom and the Love of God descended in the form of a servant. The Apocrypha, much as men despise it, formed, as it were, part of the air which He deigned to breathe. How need we say more of its value? The truth about the time and the people into which He was born

<sup>1</sup> *The Age of the Maccabees*, by A. W. Streane, D.D. (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from a chapter on "The Value of the Apocrypha" in a volume of *Addresses and Sermons On Holy Scripture and Criticism* (Macmillan, London).



must be scrutinised from every aspect. The literature of the Apocrypha furnishes one such aspect. In the history of all histories we cannot afford to ignore the witness of this group of writings.”



## II

# THE STORY OF JUDITH IN THE APOCRYPHA

“If we look at the Book of Judith as a Divine Allegory, it is a beautiful, good, holy, profitable book, which we Christians shall do well to read. For we must so understand it, as if a spiritual, holy poet or prophet spoke by the Holy Ghost, who presents such characters as the book describes, and through them preaches to us.”—*Luther*.



## II

### THE STORY OF JUDITH IN THE APOCRYPHA <sup>1</sup>

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, King of Assyria, was moved to jealousy by the growing power of "Arphaxad," King of the Medes, who had strengthened his defences and gloried in his might ; and Nebuchadnezzar summoned "the west country" to help him to overthrow the power of Arphaxad. But these subject nations refused to help ; and Nebuchadnezzar in his fury swore that when opportunity offered he would be avenged on them and would slay them

<sup>1</sup> This is a condensed form of the story for the benefit of those readers who are unfamiliar with the Book of Judith. The Book probably contains a measure of "Truth severe, with fairy fiction dressed." The line between fact and fiction in pre-Christian times was not a hard and fast one.

with the sword. He first, however, made battle against Arphaxad ; and, having defeated him by his own power, slew him and took possession of his country. Then he turned his attention to the rebel peoples of the west country (among them, the inhabitants of Palestine), and issued orders that those which would submit to him should be punished for their former disobedience, and those which still withheld allegiance should be utterly destroyed.

*Holofernes, the Assyrian General*

Now Nebuchadnezzar chose Holofernes, his chief captain, as general of the great army which was to conquer the world, and Holofernes went forth and devastated the countries which lay to the north and east of Palestine ; and the fear and dread of him fell upon all the inhabitants of "the sea-coast," who sent ambassadors tendering

their submission and entreating for peace. Holofernes accepted their submission, and also the garlands and dances with which they honoured him ; but he destroyed their gods, in order that they should worship Nebuchadnezzar only.

*The Preparations of the Israelites*

At this time the children of Israel which dwelt in Judea, having heard all that Holofernes had done to the nations and the manner in which he had spoiled their temples, began to be exceedingly afraid, and were troubled lest Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord their God should be destroyed. And the men of Bethulia, acting under the orders of the high priest Joakim,<sup>1</sup> guarded the entrance into Judea

<sup>1</sup> "Eliakim" in the Vulgate and Syriac. (See the quotation from Chaucer, p. 57 *post.*) There are many additions to the story in the Vulgate, and not a few in the Syriac version. A few of these have been incorporated in this digest.

by fortifying the ascents of the hill country : and Joakim called all the people to prayer and humiliation. So every man of Israel cried to God with great fervency ; and with great vehemency they humbled their souls ; and they and their wives and their children and their cattle and every sojourner and hireling and servant put sackcloth upon their loins, and they fell before the Temple and cast ashes upon their heads and spread out their sackcloth before the Lord ; also they put sackcloth about the altar, and cried to the God of Israel all with one consent earnestly. So God heard their prayers and looked upon their afflictions : for the people fasted many days in all Judea and Jerusalem before the sanctuary of the Lord Almighty. And Joakim, the high priest, and all the priests that stood before the Lord, and they which ministered unto the Lord,



had their loins girt with sackcloth, and offered the continual burnt-offerings and the vows and the free gifts of the people, and had ashes on their mitres, and cried unto the Lord with all their power that He would look upon all the house of Israel for good.

### *The Dismissal of Achior*

Then was declared to Holofernes the preparations that the Israelites had made, and he was exceedingly angry, and he inquired the strength and resources of Israel. And Achior, the captain of the Ammonites, recounted the history of the Jews from their early days up to that time, showing that when they served God they prospered, and when they sinned against Him they were defeated in battle. So he advised Holofernes not to attack the Israelites unless they were sinning against their God,

or else their God would defend them. But all the army of Holofernes objected to this advice, and wished to kill Achior for tendering it. They regarded the Israelites with scorn, as a people having no power or might for a strong battle ; and they urged Holofernes not to be afraid of them, but to go up and devour them. And this being the feeling and the inclination of Holofernes himself, he announced his determination to Achior, and made light of the God of Israel, saying “ Who is God but Nebuchadnezzar ? ” Moreover, he dismissed Achior from his camp, for presuming to give advice, and issued orders that he should be delivered up to the Israelites, in order that he might be slain with them. Then the servants of Holofernes took Achior and brought him near to the city of Bethulia, and bound him and cast him down ; but the Israelites came to him,

loosed him, and brought him into the city. And Achior recounted to Ozias, the chief governor of Bethulia, and to the people thereof, all that had happened to him in the camp of Holofernes, and they comforted him and praised him exceedingly.

### *The Siege of Bethulia*

The next day Holofernes gathered together his mighty army to besiege the city of Bethulia, whose resistance checked his march on Jerusalem. Upon the issue of this siege depended the fate of the Jewish land and religion. But the people of Bethulia, when they saw the multitude, were exceedingly troubled, and kept watch throughout the night. On the second day, instead of making battle against the Bethulians, Holofernes cut off their supplies of water ; and surrounded the city for thirty-four days, with the result that the people

could not escape, and they had no water to drink. Therefore their hearts failed them, and their women and youths fainted for thirst. Then the inhabitants of Bethulia assembled to Ozias, their chief governor, and urged him to surrender the city to Holofernes ; and there was great weeping with one consent in the assembly ; and they cried unto the Lord God with a loud voice. But Ozias exhorted the people to be of good courage and to endure for five days longer, in which space the Lord might turn His mercy toward them and not forsake them utterly ; but if not, he promised to do according to their wishes.

### *Judith and the Governors of Bethulia*

Now, at this time, Judith<sup>1</sup> heard of all these things, and she called for Ozias and the other governors of the city : she was

<sup>1</sup> The name Judith (יְהוּדִית) is a very ancient one. It was the name of one of the wives of Esau (Genesis xxvi. 34).

a widow of rank, wealth, and wondrous beauty, but she had renounced all worldly pleasures and spent her days in the oratory on her housetop in prayers and fastings ; and there was none that gave her an evil word, for she feared God exceedingly. To this wise and holy woman the governors of the city repaired ; but when she spake to them she blamed them for having circumscribed God's power and for their failing faith : " If God be not minded to help us within these five days, He hath power to defend us in such time as He will, or to destroy us before the face of our enemies. But do not ye pledge the counsels of the Lord our God : for God is not as man, that He should be threatened ; neither as the son of man, that He should be turned by entreaty. Wherefore let us wait for the salvation that cometh from Him, and call upon Him to help us, and He will hear our

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voice, if it please Him." With the piety and wisdom of this charge Ozias agreed, yet he could not break his oath to the people ; but he asked that Judith, as a holy woman, would pray for rain, so that the lack of water might be remedied.

### *The Resolution of Judith*

But Judith made a resolution to deliver Israel by other means. She did not, however, unfold her plans to any one ; she merely asked Ozias to permit her to go out of the gates of the city, with her maid, in the dead of the night. And the permission was immediately granted. Then Judith humbled herself before God and prayed Him to give into her hand the power that she had conceived, and to throw down the strength of the proud Assyrians, in order that the Temple might not be profaned. After which, she pulled off her sack-

cloth and the garments of her widowhood, and arrayed herself in festal apparel and beautified herself greatly with jewels and ornaments ; and she gave her maid provisions to carry, so that when they went among the Assyrians they might not have to eat their " unclean " food. And as they departed out of the city the elders wished Judith God's favour in her enterprise. Then she and her maid went straight towards the Assyrian camp, and they were at once taken captive and questioned by the soldiers ; and Judith told them that she was a fugitive from the Hebrews, and that she had an announcement to make to Holofernes whereby he should win all the hill country. So the soldiers conducted her to the tent of the general, who asked her the cause of her coming, and she told him that, as the Bethulians in their extremity of hunger and thirst purposed to sin against

God in eating things forbidden by the Law, she had fled from them, as she knew that if they so sinned God would deliver them into the power of Holofernes. Then she asked him that she might be allowed to go into the valley each night to pray to God, in order that He should tell her when the Bethulians had committed their sin and were ripe for destruction at the hand of the Assyrians. And her beauty and her wisdom overcame Holofernes completely, and he granted her request ; but, when he proposed that she should eat of his food and drink of his wine, she explained that she might eat only of the provisions which she had brought with her. Then she and her maid abode in the camp three days, going out each evening into the valley to pray, and Judith besought that the Lord would direct her way to the raising up of the children of His people.



*Judith slays Holofernes*

But, on the fourth day, with no good intent, Holofernes arranged a banquet for his servants only (calling none of his officers), and instructed his eunuch Bagoas<sup>1</sup> to persuade Judith to attend it, to which request she consented: still she ate only of her own provisions. And as Holofernes gazed on her, her beauty ravished him; and he drank wine so freely that he became drunken. Then, when his servants had departed, Judith, praying to God for strength, drew his scimitar and speedily beheaded him, pulled the mosquito curtain over the corpse, and handed his head to her waiting-maid, who put it into their empty provision-bag. And so they twain went forth as if to go to the valley to prayer; but they proceeded to Bethulia.

<sup>1</sup> "Vagao," in the Vulgate.

And when the governors and people of the city were gathered together, she produced the head of Holofernes, and called upon all to praise God who had destroyed the chief of their enemies by the hand of a woman. She called, too, for Achior the Ammonite (whom Holofernes had previously dismissed from the Assyrian camp), and told him of all that God had done ; and he believed in God greatly, and was circumcised, and became a proselyte to the Jewish faith. Then all the people having worshipped God, and Ozias having blessed Judith, she exhorted them to place the head of Holofernes on the highest place of the city walls, and to gather a host which on the morrow should rush out as if to make an attack on the Assyrians, who seeing the army advancing and finding Holofernes dead, would be overcome with panic and would flee and be routed. And so it happened as she had

foretold. The Assyrians were terror-struck, chased, and slain ; and the Israelites got much spoil, and were greatly enriched ; and to Judith were given all the possessions of Holofernes.

*The Rejoicings of the Israelites*

Then Joakim, the high priest, accompanied by members of the Sanhedrin, came from Jerusalem, and blessed Judith ; and the women of Israel blessed her, and crowned her and themselves with olives, and all the people manifested their joy in song and dance. And Judith sang a song of praise to the Lord “ great and glorious, marvellous in strength, invincible,” who had delivered the enemy of her people into her hands. Moreover, the people of Bethulia went to the sanctuary at Jerusalem, and worshipped God, and purified themselves, and offered their whole burnt

offerings and their free-will offerings and their gifts ; and Judith dedicated to God all the possessions of Holofernes which the people had given to her. So Judith and the people kept festival in Jerusalem for three months ; after which, every one went to his own inheritance ; then Judith returned to her former life of prayer and retirement, and continued in honour through all the country right up to the day of her death. Before she died, she distributed all her goods to her nearest of kin ; and she set free the maid who had shared her peril in the Assyrian camp. And the house of Israel lamented Judith seven days ; and they buried her in the sepulchre of her husband Manasseh.

III  
THE ANGLO-SAXON POEM  
*JUDITH*

“Hoc carmen, omnium hujus generis facile pulcherrimum.”  
—*Ettmüller* (“*Scôpas and Bôceras*”).



III  
THE ANGLO-SAXON POEM  
*JUDITH*

THIS dramatic epic, based on the story of Judith in the Vulgate, originally comprised twelve cantos; but only the last three (corresponding with ch. xii. 10 to xvi. 1 of the Book of Judith) are preserved entire. The remainder is now irretrievably lost. Still, the noble Fragment shows us that the whole poem must have been a truly remarkable production. Its editors and critics are unanimous in its praise. And it has been described by Dr. Henry Sweet as "one of the noblest poems in the whole range of Old English literature, combining the highest

dramatic and constructive power with the utmost brilliance of language and metre.”<sup>1</sup>

Its earliest critics ascribed it to Cædmon. Cynewulf has also been credited with it. But in many points, Cædmon and Cynewulf are surpassed by the unknown author of *Judith*, who seems to have belonged neither to the Cædmonian nor the Cynewulfian school, although familiar with the works of both.

The date of the poem is much disputed. It has been placed, by various writers, in the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.

Professor A. S. Cook,<sup>2</sup> of Yale, propounds an interesting and ingenious theory as to the occasion of the poem. He thinks that it was composed (perhaps by St. Swithun, Bishop of Winchester) in or

<sup>1</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Reader* (Clarendon Press).

<sup>2</sup> *Judith*. By A. S. Cook (Heath & Co., Boston, U.S.A.).



about the year 856 in gratitude for the deliverance of Wessex from the fury of the Northmen, and dedicated to the honour of the adopted daughter of England—Judith,<sup>1</sup> wife of King Æthelwulf. Thus, in the poem, the Northmen are represented by the Assyrians, the English by the Jews, and Queen Judith by her namesake in the Apocrypha. And lest objection should be taken to the “identity-of-name” theory, Professor Cook points out that in 829 Walafriid Strabo addressed a poem to the Frankish royal family in

<sup>1</sup> This Judith, the beautiful daughter of Charles the Bald, on the death of Æthelwulf, married her step-son Æthelbald, and later, Baldwin, Count of Flanders. She was the ancestress of Matilda, the wife of William I.

Mention may be made of another Judith, the niece of the Conqueror, and wife of Waltheof, the Saxon Earl of Northampton and Huntingdon, who betrayed her husband to the scaffold in 1076. Waltheof, at first, had held out against William, but afterwards submitted and was received into favour. The Norman courtiers, however, and his Norman wife Judith seem to have called for his blood, and he was beheaded at Winchester. By the English he was regarded as a saint and martyr.

which he compares Judith,<sup>1</sup> the second wife of Louis the Pious and mother of Charles the Bald, to the Jewish heroine ; and that in 836 the learned Rabanus Maurus, one of the first theologians and scholars of that epoch, dedicated to the same Judith his commentary upon the Book of Judith, accompanying it with a prayer for his empress, couched in heroic verse, and with an Epistle Dedicatory, in which he averred that he had inscribed his work to her, because she bore the name of Judith.

<sup>1</sup> This Judith, the wondrously beautiful daughter of Count Welf of Bavaria, was a dangerous and ambitious woman who caused ceaseless trouble in France by her constant intrigues for her son.

Another Judith, known to history, is the Jewish princess, who, about A.D. 960, conceived the bloody design of murdering all the members of the Abyssinian royal family, and of establishing herself in their stead. The project was in part successful, and Judith reigned for forty years over the greater portion of the kingdom, and transmitted the crown to her descendants, who held it for more than 300 years. Judith, possibly, was influenced by her name ; as when she formed her project, the Abyssinians were encompassed by the Mohammedans, the enemies of their religion.

The Provost of University College, London,<sup>1</sup> who dates the poem between the years 915 and 918 or soon after, offers a Mercian heroine as the inspiration of the poet—Æthelflæd, “Lady of the Mercians,” daughter of Ælfred, who by no ordinary strategy raised her kingdom and her people to their old position. “She, like the Hebrew Judith, abandoned the older strategy of raid and battle, not indeed to murder the Danish chief, but to build fortresses and beleaguer her enemies.”

If a choice has to be made between these two theories (leaving all others out of the question) the present writer would incline to the later date suggested, not on account of the application to Æthelflæd, but because of the unique style of the poem.

The translation of the portions of the

<sup>1</sup> *Judith*. By T. Gregory Foster (Trübner, Strassburg).

Fragment which follow is by the late Professor Henry Morley.<sup>1</sup> His version is less literal and therefore more pleasant to read than the translations published by Professor Cook and Dr. Garnett.<sup>2</sup>

As the poem is little known in England, save to students of Old English, a *résumé* of it is given.

The Fragment commences with the lines :—

She doubted not the glorious Maker's gifts  
 In this wide earth ; from the great Lord to find  
 Ready protection when she needed most  
 Grace from the highest Judge ; that He, whose  
                   power  
 Is over all beginnings, with His peace  
 Would strengthen her against the highest terror.  
 Therefore the heavenly Father, bright of mood,  
 Gave her her wish, because she ever had  
 Firm faith in the Almighty.

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<sup>1</sup> *English Writers*, vol. ii. (Cassell, London).

<sup>2</sup> *Elene : Judith, &c.* By James M. Garnett (Ginn & Co., Boston, U.S.A.). There is also a good translation by another American scholar, Professor J. L. Hall.

*Holofernes prepares a banquet*

In the story in the Apocrypha, Holofernes' banquet is for his own servants only: none of his officers are invited. In the poem we get the exact opposite. The poet, throughout his work, does not hesitate to transpose, condense, invent, embellish, and elaborate; and it is rare that he makes a change from the original without sound judgment. It will be noticed also that he applies the manners and characters of his time to the Jewish story, and thus in reality makes it "an Anglo-Saxon romance."

Then heard I Holofernes bade prepare  
 Wine quickly, with all wonders gloriously  
 Prepare a feast, to which the chief of men  
 Bade all his foremost thanes, and with great haste,  
 Shield-warriors obeyed, came journeying  
 To the rich lord the leader of the people.  
 That was the fourth day after Judith, shrewd  
 Of thought, with elfin beauty, sought him first.

*Holofernes and his guests carouse*

In the Scripture narrative there is no drunkenness at the feast, except the gross case of Holofernes himself. In the poem the drunkenness of the officers makes Judith's escape, after slaying Holofernes, easily possible, and lays the Assyrian warriors open to the attack of the Bethulians at dawn. As Judith is not present at the banquet, the bard is at liberty to emphasise its uproarious character; and, incidentally, he, as a Christian poet, improves the occasion and sounds a warning against drunkenness.

Then to the feast they went to sit in pride  
 At the wine drinking, all his warriors  
 Bold in their war-shirts, comrades in his woe.  
 There were deep bowls oft to the benches borne,  
 Cups and full jugs to those who sat in hall.  
 The famed shield-warriors shared the feast, death-  
 doomed,

Though that the chief, dread lord of earls, knew  
not.

Then Holofernes, the gold friend of man,  
Joyed in the pouring out, laughed, talked aloud,  
Roared and uproared, that men from far might  
hear

How the stern-minded stormed and yelled in  
mirth,

Much bidding the bench sitters bear their part  
Well in the feasting. So the wicked one  
Through the day drenched his followers with wine,  
The haughty Gift Lord, till they lay in swoon ;  
His nobles all o'er drenched as they were struck  
To death, and every good poured out of them.

*Judith is brought to Holofernes' tent*

The poet represents Judith as being brought to Holofernes' tent after the feast is over. In the original story she appears during the feast.

So bade the lord of men serve those in hall  
Till the dark night drew near the sons of men.  
Then bade the malice-blind to fetch with speed  
The blessed maid, ring-wreathed, to his bed-rest.  
The attendants quickly did as bade their lord,

Head of mailed warriors, in a twinkling went  
 To the guest-chamber, where they Judith found  
 Prudent in soul, and then shield warriors  
 Began to lead the pious, the bright maid  
 To the tent, the high one, where within at night  
 The chief at all times rested, Holofernes,  
 Hateful to God the Saviour. There was hung  
 All golden a fair fly-net round the bed  
 Of the folk-leader, that the baleful one,  
 The chief of warriors, might look through on each  
 Child of the brave who came therein, and none  
 Might look on him of mankind, save 'twere one  
 Of his own ill-famed warriors whom the proud one  
 Bade to draw near, gone in for secret council.  
 Then they brought quickly to his place of rest  
 The woman wise of wit ; went rugged men  
 To make known to their lord that there was  
     brought  
 The holy woman to his bower tent.

*Holofernes enters his tent and falls on  
 his bed in a drunken sleep*

It has been suggested that a direct motive is here provided by the poet for Judith's conduct in slaying Holofernes,



his evil desires and intentions being referred to the moment of his entry into the pavilion, which immediately precedes his drunken stupor and death. Judith sees his design : she devises her plan in an instant : she slays him to defend her purity. (The frequent use of the word "maid" suggests that the poet purposely regarded Judith as a virgin, not as a widow.)

Notice that Holofernes is styled "the king." Nebuchadnezzar does not appear in the poem : he is merged in his general. By reducing the number of the *dramatis personæ*, practically, to three — Judith, Holofernes, and Judith's maid—the story stands out crisp and well-defined. There is no mention of Ozias, Achior, or Bagoas. Warriors and servants appear, but they are un-named.

Then was the famed one blithe of mood, the chief  
Of cities thought the bright maid to defile

With filth and stain, but that the glorious Judge  
 Would not allow, who kept the flock of fame,  
 The Lord, who guides the good, stayed him in that.  
 Then went the devilish one, with crowd of men,  
 Baleful, to seek his bed, where he should lose  
 His prosperous life, at once, within a night ;  
 There had he to await his end, on earth  
 A bitter one, such as he in old time  
 Wrought for himself, while he, bold chief of men,  
 Dwelt on this earth under the roof of clouds.  
 So drunken then with wine the king fell down  
 In the midst of his bed, that counsel he knew none  
 Within the chamber of his thought. Out from  
     within  
 Marched with all haste the warriors steeped in  
     wine,  
 Who led the faithless, hated chief to bed  
 For the last time. The Saviour's handmaid then  
 Gloried, intently mindful how she might  
 Take from the hateful one most easily  
 His life before the drunkard woke to shame.

*Judith prays for help, and beheads  
 Holofernes*

Professor Cook points out that, as far  
 as we can judge, all is frankness and fair-

dealing on Judith's part. "We hear nothing of her requesting permission to go beyond the lines for prayer, and there is no hint of her practising deception, or otherwise compromising herself, in the whole course of the poem. She is a heroine *sans peur et sans reproche*, unless we account her deed in itself as the exploit of a vulgar assassin. Admitting the purity of her intentions, and the essentially righteous character of the blow she inflicted, she remains the unsullied champion and deliverer of her people, as stainless and single-minded as the Maid of Orleans."

Her prayer, in the poem, contains an intentional anachronism. Judith, the strict Jewess, is transformed into a Christian—a believer in the Holy Trinity.

The reflective comments throughout the poem show that the intention of the bard was to teach a lesson on faith in

God. The believing Judith is painted as white as a lily ; the heathen Holofernes as black as hell. And nothing less than eternal torture is shown to be his well-deserved doom.

Then she of braided locks, the Maker's maid,  
Took a sharp sword, hard from the grinding, drew it  
With strong palm from the sheath, and then by  
name

Began to name Heaven's Warden, Saviour  
Of all who dwell on earth, and spake these words :  
" God, first Creator, Spirit of Comfort, Son  
Of the Almighty, glorious Trinity,  
I will pray for Thy mercy upon me  
Who need it. Strongly is my heart now stirred,  
Distressed the mind sorely disturbed with care :  
Give to me, lord of Heaven, victory  
And true belief, that with this sword I may  
Hew at this Giver of Death. Grant me success,  
Strong Lord of men, never had I more need  
Of Thy compassion ; now, O mighty Lord,  
Bright-minded giver of renown, avenge  
What stirs my mood to anger, mind to hate."  
He then, the highest Judge, encouraged her  
At once with strength, so doth He to each one

Of those here dwelling who seek Him for help  
 With reason and with true belief. Her mood  
 Then became unoppressed and renovate  
 With holy hope ; she took the heathen then  
 Fast by his hair, and drew him with her hands  
 Shamefully towards her, and laid with skill  
 The hateful man where she most easily  
 Might have the wicked one within her power.  
 She, braided-locked, then struck the scather-foe  
 With glittering sword, him in whose thought was  
 hate,

That she cut half his neck through, and he lay  
 In swoon, drunk, with a death wound, but not yet  
 Was dead, his soul all fled ; the woman then,  
 Famous for strength, with vigour struck again  
 The heathen dog, so that his head went forth  
 Upon the floor. Then the foul carcass lay  
 Empty behind, while the soul went elsewhere  
 Under the abyss, and there it was condemned,  
 Tied down to torment ever after, wound  
 About with serpents, fixed to punishment,  
 Chained in hell's burning after it went hence.  
 Nor must he hope at all, in darkness whelmed,  
 That he can come thence from the serpent's hall,  
 But there shall dwell ever and ever more  
 Forth without end in the dark cavern home,  
 Deprived for ever of the joys of light.

*Judith returns with the head of  
Holofernes to Bethulia*

Great glory Judith then had gained in strife,  
As God, the Lord of Heaven, granted her,  
Who gave her victory. The clear-witted maid  
Then quickly brought the leader's bleeding head  
Into the bag that her attendant maid,  
A pale-faced woman, trained to noble ways,  
Had carried thither with the food of both,  
And Judith, thoughtful minded, gave it then,  
So gory, to her maid to carry home.  
Then both the women went directly thence  
Bold in their strength, exulting in success,  
Out from that host, till they might clearly see  
The glittering walls of fair Bethulia.

After an account of the welcome reception of Judith by the Bethulians, and the vigorous rout of the Assyrians, there are two well-worked-up incidents — the officers' fear of waking Holofernes, and the finding his corpse in the tent. Then the poet's thoughts turn to the spoils of the battlefield, and the praise of Judith.

The conclusion of the poem should be compared with the opening cantos. The poem is a fragment; yet the fragment "conveys the impression of apparently motivated completeness." The most important portion of the poem, fortunately, has been preserved: the lost portion can be better spared.

The bard does not translate the triumphal song of Judith. He leaves her laden with a conqueror's spoils, not even hinting that she dedicated them to God. He does not tell of her return to a life of retirement and prayer. Such further details were beside his purpose.

On these omissions, Professor Morley well says:—"Our poet did not sing for the pleasure of the cloister, but for rough men in the world of action, who delighted in daring deeds, and who cared little for mere preaching. They liked to hear about

the din of battle, and after the battle rich spoils of the battlefield. . . . Here, therefore, the tale ended, with a swift-closing reminder of praise due to the Creator. Our First-English poets were religious but not outwardly meditative. They joined their music to the living energies of the young world they sought to bring to God.”

For all this Judith gave to God the praise,  
The glorious Lord of men who gave her honour,  
Glory in Earth's kingdom, and reward in Heaven,  
In the bright skies reward of victory :  
Because she had a true belief in God  
Almighty, and at the end had not a doubt  
Of the reward for which she long had yearned.

*The Doxology*

For this to latest ages evermore  
Be glory unto the dear Lord who made  
The wind and air, the heavens and wide earth,  
And also the wild streams He made, and He  
Through His own mercy made the joys of heaven.



## IV

### REFERENCES TO JUDITH IN THE WRITINGS OF ÆLFRIC, CHAUCER, SHAKESPEARE, POPE, SCOTT, THACKERAY, DICKENS, RUSKIN, AND OTHERS.

#### JUDITH IN ART, AND MUSIC

“ Spite of his rage, and his threats, and his lust,  
Great Holofernes is stretched in the dust ;  
He at a woman’s feet bowed him and fell ;  
Him his own falchion hath hurried to hell :  
He that o’er kindreds and nations had sway,  
He, whom the wide world had learned to obey,  
Found in the beauty of woman his lure,—  
Found it and perished,—and yet she is pure.”

—*John Mason Neale.*

“ Blessed art thou, O Judith, among women.  
What thou hast wrought to-day for Israel  
Shall be remembered to thy praise for ever.”

—*From Dr Arne’s Oratorio.*



## IV

### JUDITH IN LITERATURE

ÆLFRIC'S *Homily* on Judith<sup>1</sup> contains an outline of the story in the Apocrypha, much of the wording being reproduced almost literally. It contained over 500 lines, of which 445 are extant. The portion lacking comprised the greater part of the allegorical interpretation of the story and a panegyric on chastity. The Homily was written in metrical prose, or rather (as Professor Skeat describes it) in "a loose sort of alliterative verse." It was composed, probably, at the very end of the tenth century or at the very beginning of the eleventh century A.D. Ælfric in his tract *On the Old Testament*

<sup>1</sup> ed. Assman in Grein's *Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Prosa*.

writes : “ It (Judith) is also rendered into English, after our manner, as an example to you men that you should defend your country with weapons against an invading army.”

Chaucer has several references to Judith. In his prose tale of *Melibeus* we read : “ Iudith, by hir good counseil, delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelled, out of the handes of Olofernus, that hadde it biseged and wolde have al destroyed it.”

In his *Tale of the Man of Lawe* this verse occurs :—

Who yak Iudith corage or hardinesse  
To sleen him, Olofernus, in his tente,  
And to deliveren out of wrecchednesse  
The peple of God.

And in *The Marchante's Tale* :—

Lo, Iudith, as the storie eek telle can,  
By wys conseil she goddes peple kept  
And slow him, Olofernus, whyl he slepte.

But the best-known reference is contained in the section headed "De Oloferno" in *The Monke's Tale* :—

Was never capitayn under a king  
 That regnes mo putte in subieccioun,  
 Ne strengre was in feeld of alle thing,  
 As in his tyme, ne gretter of renoun,  
 Ne more pompous in heigh presumpcioun  
 Than Oloferne, which fortune ay kiste  
 So likerously, and ladde him up and doun  
 Till that his heed was of, er that he wiste.

Nat only that this world hadde him in awe  
 For lesinge of richnesse or libertee,  
 But he made every man reneye his lawe.  
 "Nabugodonosor was god," seyde he,  
 "Noon other god sholde adoured be,"  
 Ageyns his heste no wight dar trespace  
 Save in Bethulia, a strong citee,  
 Wher Eliachim a prest was of that place.

But tak kepe of the deeth of Olofern ;  
 Amidde his host he dronke lay a night,  
 With-inne his tent, large as is a bern,  
 And yit, for al his pompe and al his might

Judith, a womman, as he lay upright,  
 Sleping, his heed of smoot, and from his tente  
 Ful prively she stal from every wight,  
 And with his heed unto hir toun she wente.

. . . . .

The allusions to the Book of Judith in the Homilies of the Church of England are sufficiently interesting to be reproduced. And it is, perhaps, little realised in what high esteem the Reformers held the Apocrypha.<sup>1</sup> There are about eighty quotations from, and references to, the Apocrypha in the two Books of the Homilies. The Book of Wisdom ("Sapience," as it is called) and Ecclesiasticus are drawn upon most largely; there being over thirty quotations from the former, and more than twenty from the latter.

<sup>1</sup> *The Use of the Apocrypha in the Christian Church*, by W. H. Daubney, B.D. (Cambridge University Press), contains a chapter on the English and Foreign use of the Apocrypha at the Reformation period, and also a chapter of quotations from the Apocrypha in the writings of post-Reformation divines.

No quotation is made from the two Books of Esdras, or from the Second Book of the Maccabees; and there is only one allusion to I. Maccabees. Two of the Additions to Daniel—Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon—are meagrely referred to; and there is no reference at all to the Song of the Three Children. But all the other Books of the Apocrypha are quoted with the frequency that their respective sizes merit; and there are such quotations in nineteen out of the thirty-three Homilies. Moreover, the books are sometimes quoted as “Scripture,” “the infallible and undeceivable Word of God,” “the teaching of the Holy Ghost”—statements which justify Dean Stanley’s assertion<sup>1</sup> that the Church of England regards the Apocrypha as “inspired.”

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Jewish Church*, ch. xlvii. (John Murray, London).

But to return to Judith in the Homilies.

In the Homily on *The Misery of Man*, Judith's use of sackcloth, dust and ashes is referred to as an example of "a holy woman" declaring to the world her remembrance of her corrupt, frail nature, dust, earth, and ashes.

The Homily on *Fasting* contains a reference to the rejoicings of Judith and all the people of Bethulia, when God had, by the hand of a woman, slain Holofernes, the grand captain of the Assyrians' host, and discomfited all their enemies. They were "the children of the wedding, and had the bridegroom with them," and hence could not fast (St. Matthew ix. 15).

Judith and Holofernes are also referred to in the Homily *Against Gluttony and Drunkenness*: "Holofernes, a valiant and mighty captain, being overwhelmed with wine, had his head stricken from his



shoulders by that silly woman Judith." (The word "silly" here, of course, means "simple" in its best sense.)

In the Homily *Against Excess of Apparel*, after a reference to Esther in the Apocrypha, the question is asked "By what means was Holofernes deceived but by the glittering show of apparel, which that holy woman Judith did put on her, not as delighting in them, nor seeking vain voluptuous pleasure by them? But she wore it of pure necessity by God's dispensation, using this vanity to overcome the vain eyes of God's enemy. Such desire was in those noble women, being very loth and unwilling otherwise to wear such sumptuous apparel by the which others should be caused to forget themselves. These be commended in Scripture for abhorring such vanities, which, by constraint and great necessity against their

heart's desire, they were compelled to wear them for a time."

Judith is also mentioned in the Homily *Concerning Prayer*, with other "godly women who greatly prevailed in all their doings by giving their minds earnestly and devoutly to prayer."

In the Homily on *Common Prayer and Sacraments*, the example of the people of Bethulia in their use of "common prayer" is given: "When Holofernes besieged Bethulia, by the advice of Judith, they fasted and prayed, and were delivered." And a little later on, the words occur: "The Jews also, when in the time of Judith they did with all their heart pray God to visit His people of Israel, had prepared their hearts before they began to pray."

A few words may be added on a kindred subject. Portions of Ecclesiasticus, the

Book of Wisdom, Baruch, Tobit, Judith,<sup>1</sup> Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon were read as Lessons in Church, from 1549 to 1871; and in the Preface of the Prayer-Book, "Concerning the Service of the Church," drawn up in 1549, these words occur: "Here you have an Order for Prayer and for reading of the holy Scripture, much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old Fathers, and a great deal more profitable and commodious than that which of late was used. It is more profitable, because here are left out many things, whereof some are untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious; and nothing is ordained to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same." Dean Stanley might have re-

<sup>1</sup> The whole of the Book of Judith was read from October 5th to 12th. It still occupies a place in the Roman Breviary, for the fourth week in September.

ferred justly to these words as strengthening his contention that the Church of England regards the Apocrypha as “inspired.”

. . . . .

Leaving theological discussion we now come to Shakespeare, whose knowledge of the Apocrypha was considerable. It has been estimated that there are more than 150 parallels or allusions in his works to passages in the Apocrypha.<sup>1</sup> And it is well worthy of note that each of his two daughters was named after a heroine of the Apocrypha—Susanna and Judith. The name of the schoolmaster in *Love's Labour's Lost* is the name of the Assyrian general in the Book of Judith.<sup>2</sup> But other allusions to this particular book

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare and Holy Scripture*, by Thomas Carter, D.Th. (Hodder & Stoughton, London).

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Israel Gollancz thinks that Shakespeare's use of the name Holofernes was possibly derived from Rabelais: “Tubal Holofernes taught Gargantua his A.B.C.” But it is perhaps significant that in Shakespeare's Comedy, Holofernes

are doubtful. Shakespeare may, or may not, have had Judith ix. 4 ("O God, O my God, heare me also a widow") in his mind when he penned the lines in Constance's speech (*King John*, III., i. 107): "Arme, arme, you heavens, against these perjured kings, a widow cries, be husband to me, heavens."

And in *Henry V.* (IV., vii. 60) it is equally doubtful whether the passage:—

And make them skirr away, as swift as stones  
Enforced from the old Assyrian slings,

was suggested by Judith ix. 7: "Behold the Assyrians are multiplied by their power . . . they truste in shield, speare, and bowe and sling."

. . . . .

plays the part of Judas Maccabæus (one of the chief heroes of the Apocrypha) in the pageant "The Nine Worthies."

The name Holofernes appears as that of the royal bridegroom in the Hermann version of the St. Ursula legends (*circa* 1183).

Orophernes, the original form of the name, is found several times among the names of the Cappadocian Kings in the immediate centuries before Christ.

The next two references go to show that the story of Judith and Holofernes enjoyed a popularity, of a kind, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In the *Diary of Samuel Pepys* this entry occurs: "August 6-8, 1663. In our way, tho' nine o'clock at night, I carried them into a puppet play<sup>1</sup> in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where there was the story of Holofernes, and other clockwork well done." And according to Hone's *Every-Day Book*: "Judith and Holofernes were represented at a show in St. Bartholomew's Fair in 1721."

Pope, in his *January and May*, has these two lines showing his acquaintance with the Book of Judith:—

Heroic Judith, as old Hebrews shew,  
Preserved the Jews and slew th' Assyrian foe.

Sir Walter Scott, in *Pevevil of the Peak*

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps worth recording that in the surviving puppet play "Punch and Judy," Professor Skeat says

(ch. vi.), makes Sir Geoffrey liken the Countess to "Judith in the Holy Apocrypha, which I joy to hear once more read in churches"—a notable expression of Scott's opinion.

Thackeray, in *The Newcomes* (ch. xxv.), makes Clive say of Ethel's appearance, "She would do for Judith, wouldn't she?"

Charles Dickens, in *Little Dorrit* (ch. xxi.), represents Mrs. Merdle as likened by the Bishop to Judith.

Sir Walter Besant, in *For Faith and Freedom* (ch. xv.), refers to Judith as one of the "women who have played great parts in history."

James Payn, in *Lost Sir Massingberd* (ch. iv.), describes the mad Lady Heath as "a Judith equal to the slaying of any Holofernes."

"Judy is for Judith." Judy as a diminutive of Judith occurs in *The Channings* by Mrs. Henry Wood, whose love for the Apocrypha is manifested by quotations therefrom in her various works. The name of the dog—"Toby"—also comes from the Apocrypha, it being transferred from "young Toby" to his canine companion (Tobit v. 16, xi. 4).

F. Marion Crawford, in his *Soprano*, writes: "The cool ferocity of some young women is awful. Judith, Jael, Delilah, and Athaliah were not mythical. Is there a man who has not wakened from dreams to find that the woman he trusted has stolen his strength or is just about to hammer the great nail through his temples?"

Justin M'Carthy derives the title of his *Lady Judith* from the Jewish heroine.

In the year 1865 "Judith" was the subject set for the Seatonian Prize Poem at Cambridge, and the prize was won by John Mason Neale. The poem<sup>1</sup> consists of eighteen cantos, and the first eight serve as an introduction to the Judith-narrative proper. The ninth contains a striking change of metre:—

"Keep the hill-passages up from the plain;  
Westward and westward they hurry amain:

---

<sup>1</sup> *Poems*, by J. M. Neale (Masters & Co., London).



Strengthen the battlement ! burnish the brass !  
Stop ye the fountain, and scarp ye the pass !  
Men of Bethulia, mark from afar  
All the long line of the oncoming war :  
See, how the horizon is heaving in life !  
Multitudes, multitudes rush to the strife !  
Squadron on squadron are battleward rolled :  
Elephants stalk in their trappings of gold :  
Steeds, in their madness of joy to engage,  
Swallow the ground in their fierceness and rage :  
Battle-axe, battle-bow, scymetar, lance,  
Flash out around them the armies advance :  
Water and earth ye have sworn to refuse,—  
Vengeance they vow on the land of the Jews :  
'None shall escape me, the great or the small,'  
Saith Holofernes, the Lord of them all.  
Men of Bethulia ! gallant and true !  
Judah and Benjamin lean upon you."

The next canto deals with the sufferings of the Bethulians from thirst, and their plea to the governors of the city to yield to Holofernes :—

"Better, where every choice seems worst,  
To die by sword, than die by thirst.  
Yield then the city, ere too late :  
Give up the keys and ope the gate."

But the governors urge the people to wait for five days more ; whereat there is high and loud debate. During the wild division, Judith comes “ in all her beauty ” :—

Heav'n sent amidst the angry press  
 A vision of such loveliness,  
 With skill to guide, with hope to bless,  
 To be their comfort in distress,  
     And bring them to the port.  
 And thus she stood amidst the strife,  
 As one that came with words of life  
     From God's celestial court.

After her speech to the governors of Bethulia and her prayer to God to strengthen her as His “ avenging minister,” she makes for the camp of Holofernes.

She came, Bethulia's fairest form,  
 As dawns the rainbow on the storm :  
 She came the chieftain's eyes to bless  
 And conquer with the loveliness  
 That, in his hour of joy and mirth,  
 Promised a Paradise on earth.  
 With words to comfort and secure,  
 The tale she wove, she framed the lure.

The death of Holofernes is made inferential, and the return of Judith to Bethulia is marked by a change of metre—a return to the metre of the ninth canto :—

Night hath come down in its gloom and its state :  
 Hark ! in the stillness a voice at the gate :  
 “ Open the portal, assemble the crowd,  
 God the Avenger hath smitten the proud ;  
 Tell ye the tidings to far and to near ;  
 Conquering Judah, away with your fear !  
 Spite of his rage, and his threats, and his lust,  
 Great Holofernes is stretched in the dust ;  
 He at a woman’s feet bowed him and fell ;  
 Him his own falchion hath hurried to hell :  
 He that o’er kindreds and nations had sway,  
 He, whom the wide world had learned to obey,  
 Found in the beauty of woman his lure,—  
 Found it and perished,—and yet she is pure.  
 Nineveh now shall have wailing for mirth,  
 Now shall her idols be bowed to the earth :  
 Send ye the tidings to Salem with speed ;  
 Incense shall glimmer and victims shall bleed.  
 Own Him, who trust in His goodness rewards,  
 KING of all kings, own Him LORD of all lords ! ”

. . . . .

Ruskin,<sup>1</sup> in his *Mornings in Florence* (§§ 60, 61), has this well-known passage:—

Do you happen to know anything about Judith yourself, except that she cut off Holofernes' head; and has been made the high light of about a million of vile pictures ever since, in which the painters thought they could surely attract the public to the double show of an execution and a pretty woman—especially with the added pleasure of hinting at previously ignoble sin? When you go home to-day, take the pains to write out for yourself, in the connection I here place them, the verses underneath numbered from the Book of Judith: you will probably think of their meaning more carefully as you write. Begin thus:—"Now at that time, Judith heard thereof, which was the daughter of Merari . . . the son of Simeon, the son of Israel." And then write out, consecutively, these pieces:—

Chapter viii. verses 2 to 8 (always inclusive) and read the whole chapter. Chapter ix. verses 1 and 5 to 7, beginning this piece with the previous sentence, "O God, my God, hear me also, a widow." Chapter ix., verses 11 to 14; x. 1-5; xiii. 6-10;

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<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, in *Our Fathers Have Told Us*, includes the Apocrypha, with the Bible, as "a direct message from God."

xi. 11-13; xvi. 1-6; xvi. 11-15; xvi. 18-19; xvi. 23-25.

Now, as in many other cases of noble history, apocryphal and other, I do not in the least care how far the literal facts are true. The conception of facts, and the idea of Jewish womanhood are there, grand and real as a marble statue—a possession for all ages. And you will feel, after you have read this piece of history, or epic poetry, with honourable care, that there is somewhat more to be thought of and pictured in Judith than painters have mostly found it in them to show you; that she is not merely the Jewish Delilah to the Assyrian Samson; but the mightiest, purest, brightest, type of high passion in severe womanhood offered to our human memory. Sandro's picture is but slight; but it is true to her, and the only one I know that is; and after writing out these verses, you will see why he gives her that swift, peaceful motion, while you read in her face only sweet solemnity of dreaming thought. "My people delivered, and by my hand, and God has been gracious to His handmaid!" The triumph of Miriam over a fallen host, the fire of exulting mortal life in an immortal hour, the purity and severity of a guardian angel—all are here; and as her servant follows, carrying indeed the head, but invisible (a mere thing to be carried—no more to be so much as thought of)

—she looks only at her mistress with intense, servile, watchful love. Faithful, not in these days of fear only, but hitherto in all her life, and afterwards for ever.

JUDITH IN ART. As Ruskin refers to the “million of vile pictures”<sup>1</sup> of Judith (a very exaggerated phrase), it may not be without interest to record the resting-place of some of the best-known paintings based on the Book of Judith, in the principal galleries of Europe:<sup>2</sup>—

*Hampton Court Palace:* Judith with the head of Holofernes (C. Allori (?), after C. Allori, Guido (?), and Teniers after Veronese); Judith with her attendant (Maratti).

*Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh:* A

<sup>1</sup> Some painters represent Judith’s act in slaying Holofernes as an act of Justice; others, as an act of Vengeance; others, as an act of Murder. The lesser artists are inclined to give it this latter feeling. Reproductions of some of the famous Judith pictures appear in the series of “Handbooks of the Great Masters,” edited by Dr. G. C. Williamson (G. Bell and Sons, London).

<sup>2</sup> There are also some notable Judith pictures in private collections, e.g. the Guido belonging to the Earl of Darnley.

trio of pictures — “The Deliverance of Bethulia” — by William Etty.

*Paris, the Louvre* : Judith and Holofernes (Vernet). *Coll. Dannat. Paris* : Judith with the head of Holofernes (John Metsys). *Lyons Museum* : Judith (Claude Ziegler). *Nantes Museum* : Judith and Holofernes (Manfredi). *Marseilles Museum* : Judith and Holofernes (H. Regnault).

*Florence, Uffizi* : Judith (Mantegna); The Return of Judith to Bethulia, and Holofernes dead in his tent (Botticelli); Judith (Palma Vecchio). *Pitti Gallery* : Judith with the head of Holofernes (C. Allori); Judith and her maid (A. Gentileschi). *Rome, the Capitol* : Judith (Balassare). *Reggio, Ch. of the Madonna* : Judith and Holofernes (Spada). *Genoa, Pal. Brignole* : Judith (Veronese). *Arpezzo* : Judith showing the head of Holofernes to the people (Benvenuti). *Naples,*

*San Martin* : Triumph of Judith (Fa. Presto). *Bologna, Gall. Hercolani* : Judith and Holofernes (Fontana). *Venice Academy* : Judith (Varotari).

*The Hague, The Royal Museum* : Judith with the head of Holofernes (P. Vandyck).

*Berlin Gallery* : Judith (Rembrandt); Judith (Romanino). *Dresden* : Judith with the head of Holofernes (Varotari).

*Gsell Coll.* : Judith (Varotari). *Vienna Gallery* : Judith with the head of Holofernes (Veronese); Judith (Varotari).

*St. Petersburg, The Hermitage* : Judith (Giorgione).

*Madrid Museum* : Judith and Holofernes, three scenes (Tintoretto).

Domenichino, Cranach, and Michael Angelo, among others, also painted pictures of Judith.

Sculptors, too, have drawn upon the story. One of the most famous, although



not one of the most pleasing, statues of Judith is in the Loggia de' Lanzi, Florence. It is by the great sculptor, Donatello<sup>1</sup> (1386-1466). Judith wears an air of determined resolution; Holofernes sits at her feet and awaits the death-blow.

Wood-carvers, likewise, have been attracted by the story. Small groups of sixteenth-century German carved boxwood work representing the death of Holofernes still exist.

“Judith and Holofernes” was also a favourite subject for tapestry-workers.<sup>2</sup>

After the capture of Tournay in 1513 by Henry VIII., sets of tapestry were given by the communal authorities to the English king and nobles. In this way the Earl of

\* <sup>1</sup> “The Judith of Donatello” is referred to by Longfellow in the third part of his *Michael Angelo*, Act V. There are several allusions in his poems to the Apocrypha. His play, *Judas Maccabæus*, is being reprinted in the series, “The Apocrypha in English and Foreign Drama.”

<sup>2</sup> *A History of Tapestry*, by W. G. Thomson (Hodder and Stoughton, London).

Suffolk came into possession of a "History of Judith."

Cardinal Wolsey, a most enthusiastic collector, possessed seven pieces containing the same story, which afterwards passed into the possession of Henry VIII., and the king also had a "piece" of Judith and Holofernes at the More, at Windsor, and at Whitehall. A "Story of Judith and Holofernes," at Sens, bears the arms of Cardinal Wolsey.

About the year 1600, Paul Van den Broeck, a weaver of Audenarde, supplied George Ghuys, the principal tapestry-dealer of the town, with a "History of Judith and Holofernes." A "History of Holofernes" was woven at Nancy, in 1617, by Bernard Van den Hagen.

In Eyam Hall, Derbyshire, there is a tapestry which is taken to represent Judith's return to Bethulia.

JUDITH IN MUSIC. The influence of the

Book of Judith on music is quite equal to that of the other portions of the Apocrypha. Defesch's oratorio *Judith* (the words by W. Huggins) was produced in London in 1733, and enjoyed some degree of popularity. About thirty years later, Dr. Arne wrote an oratorio on the same subject, Isaac Bickerstaff being responsible for the libretto; this was also produced in London, "at the Theatres Royal." It was the first oratorio in which female voices were introduced into the choruses. In 1858, Henry David Leslie composed "a biblical cantata" *Judith*, in three scenes, for the Birmingham Musical Festival; the words were "selected from the Bible" by Henry Fothergill Chorley, of *The Athenæum*. Of living musicians, Sir Hubert Parry has written an oratorio *Judith*,<sup>1</sup> in which the

<sup>1</sup> *Judith, or The Regeneration of Manasseh* (Novello, London). Sir Hubert Parry, influenced by Dean Prideaux's *Connection of the Old and New Testament*, treats the exploit of Judith as an historical event in the reign of Manasseh. The

Jewish narrative is dealt with in an original manner ; and Henry Smart, J. W. Young, and Dr. J. Varley Roberts, among others, have used portions of the Song of Judith as words for their anthems. Charles Wesley<sup>1</sup> has an allusion to Judith v. 17 in his hymn, "Equip me for the War."

Thus, from the foregoing references, it will be seen that the Book of Judith has not only interested theologians. It has inspired poets, artists, and sculptors. It has influenced novelists, playwrights, and musicians. And, even yet, it has not lost its ancient power.

king plays a leading part in the oratorio, but Dr. Parry owns to being "carried away by the superior interest of Judith's personality." The "argument" contains a novel combination of the story of the penitent king and of "the bold prophetess." Holofernes does not appear on the scene at all, and his death is only alluded to incidentally by Manasseh ; but the climax of excitement is, of course, reached when the white-robed Judith, carrying her terrible trophy, announces her triumph and the impending discomfiture of the Assyrians.

<sup>1</sup> There are allusions to the Apocrypha in more than fifty of Charles Wesley's hymns.

V

T. B. ALDRICH'S TRAGEDY  
*JUDITH OF BETHULIA*

"This woman walketh in the light of God."—*Aldrich.*

"Blest art thou  
Indeed, heroic woman, fair avenger!  
Throughout all lands thy name shall be renowned,  
And Israel bless thy memory for ever."  
—*John Fitzgerald Pennie.*



## V

### T. B. ALDRICH'S TRAGEDY

#### *JUDITH OF BETHULIA*

IT is not generally known that America<sup>1</sup> has produced a play based on the story of Judith and Holofernes. It was written by the well-known American poet and *littérateur*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and was first produced at the Tremont Theatre, Boston, on October 13, 1904.

The full text of the play, obviously, cannot be printed here; but a short description of "The Tragedy of Judith

<sup>1</sup> It may be of interest to mention that Judith gives name to several towns, &c., in America. There is the town of Judith, on the river Judith, in Montana; the town of Judith in North Carolina; Judith's Point, or Point Judith, in Rhode Island; Judith's Island, off North Carolina; and the Judith Mountains in Montana.

In South Africa, "Bethulie" is the name of a town and of a division of the Orange River Colony.

84 JUDITH IN ENGLISH LITERATURE  
of Bethulia" will give some idea of  
Aldrich's work.<sup>1</sup>

*In Bethulia.*

The first scene is laid in a street in Bethulia, the time being close on day-break. The three patriarchs of the beleaguered town, Ozias, Charmis, and Chabris, enter with two captains of the guard, preceded by several night-watchmen carrying lighted lanterns slung on long staves. The difficulties of the situation are dis-

<sup>1</sup> Aldrich also published a narrative poem entitled *Judith and Holofernes* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston). And in the preface he owned that he had widely departed from precedent in his delineation of Judith, "who moves through the Apocrypha a beautiful and cold-blooded abstraction, with scarcely any feminine attribute excepting her religious fervour. The distance between her and Charlotte Corday, humanly speaking, is immeasurable, though their heroic deeds are nearly identical in motive. Judith's character throughout the ancient legend lacks that note of tenderness with which the writer has here attempted to accent her heroism." The same "note of tenderness" appears in the play.

It will, of course, be remembered that the story of Judith led Charlotte Corday, at the loss of her own life, to rid her country of the monster Marat, one of the chiefs of the French Revolution.



cussed. The people of Bethulia have threatened to break down the gates unless within five days the governors of the city get them food, or come to terms with Holofernes, the Assyrian general. Starvation faces the inhabitants; the water supplies are cut off, or polluted: yet, on the other hand, surrender means slaughter.

The second scene presents the spectacle of a crowded town in a state of siege. Achior, the Ammonite, who has lately fled from the camp of Holofernes, is waiting in front of the tower, upon which Judith has been keeping vigil, communing with God. Achior is in love with Judith, and unwisely presses his suit at this most inopportune time. Judith, of course, repulses him: she wishes to see the patriarchs and inquire of them their plan of action. They approach; and Ozias

informs her that unless God help them in five days the city is to be yielded. To this, Judith replies :—

“ Ah, His time is not man’s time, learned scribe !  
And who are we—the dust beneath His feet—  
To name the hour of our deliverance,  
Saying to Him : *Thus shalt Thou do, and so !* ”

While talking with the elders, Judith sees a white mailed hand which turns to ruby-red, pointing with levelled finger through the air to the Eastern Gate. She regards this as a sign to herself alone, no one else seeing the omen. The patriarchs arrange for her egress from Bethulia, and swear that they will not yield the town till she return. Achior, who has been watching the speakers, at a distance, with deep interest, has grasped the fact that Judith intends to go to the camp of Holofernes. He endeavours to dissuade her from her perilous resolve ; but being

unsuccessful he threatens to accompany her. Judith answers :—

“Thou hast no part in it. God calls His own,  
And I am His and Israël's ! I go  
To free my people, and if needs must be,  
Gladly to pay the forfeit with my life.  
There lie the pith and sum of my intent.  
Stand back and give me passage, Achior.”

The first Act is over. The scene is changed to the Eastern Gate of Bethulia, before which stand several soldiers. Two spearmen with levelled lances are keeping back, right and left, a surging mob of men, women, and children. Voices in the crowd cry “Drink ! give us drink ! we die of thirst—of thirst. Bread ! we are starving. Bread, or we must die !” Judith approaches the gate, with a crowd following. She has put off her widow's weeds and is richly dressed, with jewels in her hair and at her throat. A mantle

falling from one shoulder exposes the splendour of her attire. Close behind follows Marah, her handmaid, carrying an osier basket, containing food. The spearmen standing at the Gate examine Judith's passport, and then ranging themselves on either side salute her as she passes out of the city, followed by her maid.

*In the camp of Holofernes*

The second scene of the Act is laid in the camp of Holofernes. He is lying under a fringed canopy, surrounded by groups of Assyrian lords and captains. Spearmen and other men-at-arms are lounging round. The general is asking counsel of his officers, as to the assault of Bethulia. They give various opinions as to what the course of action should be. Their differing opinions lead to angry words, amid which Judith and her maid

enter. She throws herself at the feet of Holofernes as "a hapless woman who has fled in fear from a doomed people." The general is softened by her beauty. She tells him that the people of Bethulia, in their extremity, will sin against God in eating the first-fruits of the grain, the oil, and the wine, which, "being sanctified, are held intact for the High Priests who serve before the Lord in the great temple at Jerusalem." Then will God forsake them, and Holofernes shall sweep down on them and strike them dead!

"But now, my lord, ere this shall come to pass  
Five days must wane, for they touch not the food  
Until the Jew Abijah shall return  
With the Priests' message. Here beneath thy  
tents,

O Holofernes, would I dwell the while,  
Asking but this, that I and my handmaid  
Each night, at the sixth hour, may egress have  
Into the valley, undisturbed to pray.  
I would not be thy prisoner, but thy guest."

The general consents to her request. He also offers her fruit and meat for her repast, but she explains that it is not lawful for her to eat of them; she must eat of the food of her own land, of which her maid has brought a supply. Holofernes then retires. He has partly impressed Judith by his outward gentleness and kingly bearing. While she is musing, Achior abruptly appears. He halts irresolutely, glancing back over his shoulder, as if he were pursued. Judith rushes, seizes him by the arm, urges him to flee, and reproves him for his rashness in following her. Holofernes enters. He recognises Achior, and suspects Judith of being intimate with him. Judith, by her coldness towards the Ammonite, convinces the Assyrian general that he has no cause for jealousy. But Achior, nevertheless, is dragged off to prison.

The third Act opens with a love-scene in the early twilight, in a secluded wood near the Assyrian camp. Holofernes tells Judith of his admiration of her dignity, her wisdom, and her loveliness. He explains that those who have made his name a terror through the land have misused him : that when the war is over he will hang “ his helmet in a garden for the birds to build a nest in ” :—

“ My grim captains here  
 Would smile behind their beards, could they but  
     know  
 What soft ambition seizes me at times  
 Even in the heat and tumult of debate—  
 A longing to be other than I am,  
 To turn my back on all this pomp of war  
 And dwell unknown, in some untroubled spot,  
 With wife and children, dreaming life away  
 Beneath the palms and my Assyrian sky.”

A messenger enters, to tell Holofernes that his council of captains awaits his

presence. He leaves Judith with great reluctance, but shortly after sends a command to her to feast with him that night. Judith takes Bagoas, the captive-slave of Holofernes, into her confidence. He, wishful for liberty, is willing to fall in with her plans. He gives her a subtle sleeping-draught to mix with his master's wine. He also offers, with his own hand, to slay Holofernes if she wish ; but Judith asks him to promise to slay her, should she " in the doing find herself undone."

*In the tent of Holofernes*

The scene is changed. The tent of Holofernes is revealed. He is seated on a long bench, looking dejected. A dream has unstrung his heart. Judith enters and offers to be his only slave that night, to wait on him and bring his meat and wine. While filling a flagon, she hastily



drops the sleeping-draught therein and prays, at intervals, under her breath :—

“ O Thou who lovest Israel, give me strength  
 And cunning such as woman never had,  
 That my deceit may be his stripe and scar,  
 My kiss his swift destruction ! If the drug  
 Work not its magic on him, then—what then ! ”

“ O save me, Lord, from that dark cruel prince,  
 And from mine own self save me ! for this man,  
 A worshipper of senseless carven gods,  
 Slayer of babes upon the mother-breast,  
 He, even he, hath by some conjurer’s trick,  
 Or by his heathen beauty, in me stirred  
 Such pity as unnerves the lifted hand.  
 Oh, let not my hand fail me, in Thy name.”

“ Thou that rulest all,  
 Hold not Thy favour from me that I seek  
 This night to be Thy instrument ! Dear Lord,  
 Look down on me a widow of Judea,  
 A feeble thing unless Thou sendest strength !  
 A woman such as I slew Sisera,  
 The hand that pierced his temples with a nail  
 Was soft and gentle, like to mine, a hand  
 Moulded to press a babe against her breast !

Thou didst sustain her. Oh, sustain Thou me,  
 That I may free Thy chosen from their chains!—  
 Each sinew in my body turns to steel,  
 My pulses quicken, I no longer fear!  
 My prayer has reached Him, sitting there on high!  
 The hour is come I dreamed of! This for thee,  
 O Israèl, my people, this for thee!"

Judith slays the sleeping Holofernes with his own falchion. Her maid goes into the tent and immediately emerges bearing his head enveloped in her mistress' mantle. They flee to Bethulia.

### *In Bethulia*

The last scene of all. The market-place in Bethulia, four days later. Garlands and cloths of gold and purple tissues hang from the windows of the houses. In the centre of the square, a platform two or three feet in height, supports a large chair richly draped.

People of every condition are discussing the panic and flight of the Assyrians when they found that "the Hebrew witch" had slain Holofernes. The multitude in the market-place sways to and fro, and voices cry "She is coming! She who saved us is coming!" The governors of the city enter, accompanied by the chief captains, and men-at-arms bearing banners. Judith follows, with a troop of maidens dancing. She is clad—not in cloth of gold, but in the sombre livery of grief—in her widow's weeds. She is very pale, and walks with bowed head, her handmaid a few steps in the rear. The governors of the city conduct her to the foot of the daïs and motion her to ascend. She demurs, as one unworthy, but is prevailed upon, amid tumultuous cries and cheers. And then she lifts her hand to beg the silence of the crowd, and utters

these noble words, ere she returns to her life of retirement :—

“ Oh, not to me, but unto the Most High  
Lift up thy voices ! Glorify His name  
With pipe and harp and solemn chanted psalm !  
Let the triumphant breath of trumpets blow  
The news to the four winds, Judea is saved !  
For once again hath God delivered us.  
He was the hand, and I was but the sword,  
The sword was I, and He the hand that smote.  
Glory and praise to Him for evermore.”

. . . . .

### *The Conclusion*

The conclusion of the story is well summed up in Aldrich's narrative poem *Judith and Holofernes*,<sup>1</sup> in words with which this book may fitly close :—

---

<sup>1</sup> Aldrich's poem and tragedy contain some remarkable parallels with the Judith-Play of the Dorset dramatist, John Fitzgerald Pennie, of Lulworth (1782-1848). The title of Pennie's "Academic Drama," in four acts, is "The Fair Avenger, or The Destroyer Destroyed." It has no small measure of literary merit, and was published in 1825 with his *Scenes in Palestine, or Dramatic Sketches from the Bible*, now a scarce book. This brief reference to Pennie's Judith-Play will suffice here, as the full text is being reprinted in the series "The Apocrypha in English and Foreign Drama."

Thus through God's grace, that nerved a gentle hand  
Not shaped to wield the deadly blade of war,  
The tombs and temples of Judea were saved.  
And love and honour waited from that hour  
Upon the steps of Judith. And the years  
Came to her lightly, dwelling in her house  
In her own city; lightly came the years,  
Touching the raven tresses with their snow.  
Many desired her, but she put them by  
With sweet denial: where Manasseh slept  
In his strait sepulchre, there slept her heart.  
And there beside him, in the barley-field  
Nigh unto Dothaim, they buried her.



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